

## Picture, Photograph — PatReitaq (N), PatRiitaq (S)

---

### CAQIQ UNA PATRIITAMI? – WHAT IS THIS IN THE PICTURE?

---



Photo: Box panel from Karluk One with a painting of people traveling in boats. Koniag, Inc. Collection.

Art is often a means of storing information, particularly among people without a written language. In addition to expressing cultural values, songs, dances, carvings, paintings, and even clothing can record family stories, historical events, and legends. Pictures are particularly important in preserving history. Like books, they create a physical record that reminds viewers of events and helps storytellers to pass details forward, beyond the living memory of a community. Graphics arts are one way of keeping cultural information alive in the present.

In classical Alutiiq society, there were at least three forms of graphic art. People painted images on wooden objects. These included hats, paddles, boxes, masks, and many other implements. They pecked pictures into stationary boulders creating petroglyphs. They incised designs into stone and bone hunting implements.

Some of these images became family symbols. If a hunter killed two seals with one harpoon strike, this very lucky event might be symbolized in paintings on his household implements. When people saw the implements they were reminded of the story, recalled the hunter's skill and good fortune, and knew that the objects belong to his family. The picture preserved a story, celebrated the hunter's talent, and expressed ownership.

Today, Alutiiq artists create pictures with modern mediums — watercolors, acrylic paints, inks, and pastels — to illustrate the people and places they love. Like ancestral pictures, these images are both aesthetic and historical. They express personal experiences and pass forward knowledge of the Alutiiq world.